

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A solidifying material for a cell electrolyte solution, characterized in that said solidifying material is a block copolymer comprising, as segments A, a polymer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution and, as segments B, a polymer compatible with said cell electrolyte solution, and absorbs and solidifies said cell electrolyte solution; a smallest unit of said block copolymer is A-B-A; and to each of said segments B, at least one group selected from the group consisting of a carboxyl group, an ester group, a hydroxyl group, a sulfonic group, an amino group[,] and a cyclic carbonate group ~~and a polyoxyalkylene group~~ is bonded via a -S- bond or a -C- bond.

Claim 2 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 1, wherein each of said segments A is a polymer selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polyethylene and polypropylene and having a weight average molecular weight of from 10,000 to 500,000 and a content of said segments A in said block copolymer is 0.5 to 70 wt.%; and each of said segments B is a polymer selected from the group consisting of polybutadiene, polychloroprene and polyisoprene and having a weight average molecular weight of from 10,000 to 300,000.

Claim 3 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 1, further comprising not greater than 85 wt.%, based on said block copolymer, of an elastomer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution.

Claim 4 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 1, which is in a form of a film or sheet of from 0.0001 to 2 mm in thickness.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): A solidifying material for a cell electrolyte solution, characterized in that said solidifying material is a graft copolymer comprising, as segments A, a polymer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution and, as segments B, a polymer compatible with said cell electrolyte solution, and absorbs and solidifies said cell electrolyte solution; and to each of said segments B, at least one group selected from the group consisting of a carboxyl group, an ester group, a hydroxyl group, a sulfonic group, an amino group[,] and a cyclic carbonate group ~~and a polyoxyalkylene group~~ is bonded.

Claim 6 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 5, wherein each of said segments A is a polymer selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polyethylene, polypropylene, polyacrylonitrile and poly(meth)acrylate ester having a weight average molecular weight of from 3,000 to 20,000, and a content of said segments A in said graft copolymer is 0.5 to 70 wt.%.

Claim 7 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 5, further comprising not greater than 85 wt.%, based on said graft copolymer, of an elastomer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution.

Claim 8 (Original): A solidifying material according to claim 5, which is in a form of a film or sheet of from 0.0005 to 2 mm in thickness.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to ~~any one of claims 1-8~~ claim 1.

Claim 10 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material for a cell electrolyte solution, characterized in that said solidifying material comprises a film or sheet of a polymer having properties that said polymer is insoluble in said cell electrolyte solution but said polymer absorbs and solidifies said cell electrolyte solution, and a backing reinforcing said film or sheet; and said backing is a woven fabric, a nonwoven fabric or a porous film.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn--Currently Amended): A solidifying material according to claim 10, wherein said polymer is a block or graft copolymer as defined in ~~any one of claims 1-8~~ claim 1.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material according to claim 10, wherein said polymer is a polymer which comprises, as a principal component, polyacrylic acid, poly(N-vinylacetamide), poly[(2-oxo-1,3-dioxoran-4-yl)methyl (meth)acrylate] or polyacrylamide.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material according to claim 10, which is in a form of particles having an average particles size not greater than 100 μm .

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material according to claim 10, wherein said backing is made of polyethylene or polypropylene.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material according to claim 10, wherein said backing is a film or sheet of from 1 to 1,200 μm in thickness and of from 95 to 100% in porosity.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): A solidifying material according to claim 10, further comprising not greater than 85 wt.%, based on said polymer, of an elastomer non-compatible with said electrolyte solution.

Claim 17 (Withdrawn, Currently Amended): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to ~~any one of claims 10-16~~ claim 10.

Claim 18 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 2.

Claim 19 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 3.

Claim 20 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 4.

Claim 21 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 5.

Claim 22 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 6.

Claim 23 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 7.

Claim 24 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 8.

Claim 25 (New): A solidifying material for a cell electrolyte solution, characterized in that said solidifying material is a block copolymer comprising, as segments A, a polymer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution and, as segments B, a polymer compatible with said cell electrolyte solution, and absorbs and solidifies said cell electrolyte solution; and smallest unit of said block copolymer is A-B-A; and to each of said segments B, at least one group selected from the group consisting of a carboxyl group, an ester group, a hydroxyl group, a sulfonic group, an amino group, a cyclic carbonate group and a polyoxyalkylene group is bonded via a -S- bond.

Claim 26 (New): A solidifying material according to claim 25, wherein each of said segments A is a polymer selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polyethylene and polypropylene and having a weight average molecular weight of from 10,000 to 500,000 and a content of said segments A in said block copolymer is 0.5 to 70 wt.%; and each of said segments B is a polymer selected from the group consisting of polybutadiene, polychloroprene and polyisoprene and having a weight average molecular weight of from 10,000 to 300,000.

Claim 27 (New): A solidifying material according to claim 25, further comprising not greater than 85 wt.%, based on said block copolymer, of an elastomer non-compatible with said cell electrolyte solution.

Claim 28 (New): A solidifying material according to claim 25, which is in a form of a film or sheet of from 0.0001 to 2 mm in thickness.

Claim 29 (New): A cell comprising, as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 25.

Claim 30 (New): A cell comprising as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 26.

Claim 31 (New): A cell comprising as a constituent element, a solidifying material according to claim 27.

BASIS FOR THE AMENDMENT

Claims 1 and 5 have been amended to not include a polyoxyalkylene group bonded to segments B.

Claim 9 has been amended to only depend on Claim 1, added Claims 18-24 now depending on Claims 2-8, respectively.

Added Claim 25 corresponds to original Claim 1, except the functional groups being bonded via a -S- bond.

Added Claims 26-31 correspond to original Claims 2-4 and 9, except being dependent on Claim 25.